



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

****NEWS RELEASE****

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Wisconsin ACT scores remain high

Burmaster calls for students to take more rigorous classes

MADISON—Wisconsin students, with a 22.2 composite score on the ACT for the seventh consecutive year, outperformed the national composite score and percentage of students meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks: the minimum ACT score that corresponds with passing college-level classes.

Sixty-eight percent (44,275) of the state's 2006 graduates took the ACT at some time during their sophomore, junior, or senior years of high school. Minority-group students were 10.9 percent of Wisconsin ACT-takers, a participation increase of 2 percentage points from five years ago. The state's 22.2 composite score missed first place among the 25 states where the ACT is the predominate college admissions test by one-tenth of a point. The national composite score was 21.1.

Percentage of Students meeting ACT College-Readiness Benchmarks

ACT Benchmark*	Wisconsin	Nation
English (18)	77	69
Math (22)	52	42
Reading (21)	61	53
Science (Biology) (24)	35	27

*A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding college-level course.

"Overall, Wisconsin beat the nation on the ACT," said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. "Our 2006 graduates showed consistent performance on their subject-area and composite scores and in attaining college readiness benchmarks. This achievement is directly related to higher percentages of our students taking a college-preparatory curriculum, which is proven to make a difference on ACT scores and future college success.

"We must encourage all students to take rigorous high school courses that fit their career interests," Burmaster said. "While we should celebrate exceeding national averages as an educational

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success, Wisconsin students, with our support, can do more. To improve academic performance we must encourage parents to be involved in course selection so our students take the rigorous classes that will better prepare them for

postsecondary studies," she said.

ACT recommends a core curriculum of four years of English and three or more years each of mathematics, science, and social studies. In Wisconsin, 57 percent of

2006 ACT Scores by School Program

	Wisconsin			Nation		
	Core Program	Less than Core	Total Group	Core Program	Less than Core	Total Group
English	22.3	20.1	21.5	21.6	19.0	20.6
Math	22.8	20.8	22.0	21.8	19.4	20.8
Reading	23.1	21.3	22.4	22.3	20.1	21.4
Science	22.8	21.3	22.2	21.7	19.7	20.9
Composite	22.9	21.0	22.2	22.0	19.7	21.1

students reported taking a core curriculum compared to 54 percent nationally. State students taking a core curriculum had a composite score of 22.9 and subject area scores that were 2.2 to 1.5 points higher than students who didn't take the ACT-recommended core course work. Nationally students who took a core curriculum had a composite score of 22.0 and subject area scores that were 2.6 to 2.0 points higher than students who took a less rigorous high school curriculum.

Seventy-seven percent of state students earned a benchmark score of 18 on the ACT English test compared to 69 percent nationally. A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50 percent or better chance of earning a "B" or higher grade or about a 75 percent chance of earning a "C" or better in the corresponding credit-bearing college courses. In mathematics, 52 percent of state students earned the benchmark score of 22 or better compared with 42 percent nationally, meaning these students are ready to take college-level algebra. Sixty-one percent earned a 21 or higher on the ACT reading test, compared with 53 percent nationally. The reading score corresponds with readiness for college-level social studies course work. For science, 35 percent of Wisconsin students earned a 24 or higher, meaning they are ready for college biology classes. Nationally, 27 percent of students earned the science (biology) benchmark score.

On ACT subject-area tests, 2006 graduates posted scores that were identical to last year with one exception. Wisconsin's ACT English score was 21.5 (20.6 nationally), mathematics 22.0 (20.8 nationally), reading 22.4 (21.4 nationally) and science 22.2, down one-tenth of a point from last year, (20.9 nationally). Wisconsin's composite score was 22.2. The national composite score was 21.1, which was up two-tenths of a point from the previous year.

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Minority-group students represented 10.9 percent of Wisconsin ACT test-takers, a slight increase from 2005 and 2.1 percentage points higher than participation in 2002 when 8.7 percent of ACT-takers were minority-group students. Generally,

Wisconsin's composite scores by racial/ethnic group were higher than the nation, with the exception of African-American and Asian students.

"We know there is a gap in

achievement between students of color,

economically disadvantaged students, and their peers," Burmaster said. "To close that gap, we must hold

steady in supporting 4-year-old kindergarten and the P-5 and Student Achievement Guarantee in

Education programs, that reduce class sizes in lower grades and provide a solid educational foundation

for our students. We must sustain our efforts to expand gifted and talented programming at the middle-

school level and continue support for Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs that counsel

students to take rigorous courses,

introduce them to college-level

studies, and provide career and

educational planning,"

Burmaster said.

This was the first year

that ACT reported scores from

the optional writing assessment. About 48 percent of Wisconsin students elected to take the writing exam

compared to 36 percent nationally. Wisconsin's average score on the essay was 7.9 points on a two- to 12-

point scale. Nationally, the average score on the essay was 7.7 points.

Nationwide, more than 1.2 million public and private school students took the ACT at some time

during their high school career. The ACT is scored on a scale of one to 36.

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**ACT Composite Scores
by Racial/Ethnic Group**

	Wisconsin		Nation	
	2005	2006	2005	2006
African American	16.9	17.0	17.0	17.1
American Indian	20.4	20.1	18.7	18.8
Asian	20.1	20.4	22.1	22.3
Hispanic	19.6	19.6	18.6	18.6
White	22.6	22.6	21.9	22.0
All Students	22.2	22.2	20.9	21.1

Wisconsin ACT Participation by Racial/Ethnic Group

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
African American	1,884	1,876	1,652	1,539	1,381
American Indian	323	318	304	292	241
Asian	1,465	1,409	1,483	1,396	1,313
Hispanic	1,147	1,061	1,035	982	864
White	35,718	37,867	38,095	38,782	37,121
Other/No Response	3,738	3,169	2,911	2,678	2,538
All Students	44,275	45,700	45,480	45,669	43,458

NOTE: Please contact district or school officials for local ACT scores or visit the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) website at < <http://dpi.wisconsin.gov/sig/index.html> >. Click on "Data Analysis."

ATTACHMENT: Additional information about state and national ACT scores follows.

**2006 ACT Composite Scores by
Racial/Ethnic Group, School Program, and College Readiness**

				Percentage Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores			
				English (18)	Mathematics (22)	Reading (21)	Science* (24)
Wisconsin	Takers	Composite Score	Percentage Taking Core				
African American	1,884	17.0	47	35	9	22	5
American Indian	323	20.1	50	63	33	47	19
Asian	1,465	20.4	58	56	42	42	23
Hispanic	1,147	19.6	50	57	29	43	19
White	35,718	22.6	59	80	55	65	38
Other/No Response	3,738	22.2	46	--	--	--	--
All Students	44,275	22.2	57	77	52	61	35
Nation	Takers	Composite Score	Percentage Taking Core	English (18)	Mathematics (22)	Reading (21)	Science* (24)
African American	139,118	17.1	53	38	11	22	5
American Indian	13,635	18.8	48	50	23	38	15
Asian	39,867	22.3	60	72	60	56	34
Hispanic	85,796	18.6	52	48	25	34	12
White	760,084	22.0	56	77	48	61	32
Other/No Response	167,955	21.1	41	--	--	--	--
All Students	1,206,455	21.1	54	69	42	53	27

NOTES: An ACT core curriculum is four years of English and three or more years each of mathematics (starting with Algebra I), science, and social studies. A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding college-level course. The science benchmark is for college-level biology.

**2006 ACT Composite Scores by
Racial/Ethnic Group and School Program***

				Composite Scores	
				Core or More	Less than Core
Wisconsin	Takers	Composite Score	Percentage Taking Core		
African American	1,884	17.0	47	17.4	16.7
American Indian	323	20.1	50	20.7	19.2
Asian	1,465	20.4	58	20.9	19.2
Hispanic	1,147	19.6	50	20.5	18.6
White	35,718	22.6	59	23.3	21.5
Other/No Response	3,738	22.2	46	23.1	21.0
All Students	44,275	22.2	57	22.9	21.0
Nation	Takers	Composite Score	Percentage Taking Core	Core or More	Less than Core
African American	139,118	17.1	53	17.8	16.2
American Indian	13,635	18.8	48	20.2	17.5
Asian	39,867	22.3	60	22.9	21.1
Hispanic	85,796	18.6	52	19.5	17.6
White	760,084	22.0	56	22.9	20.6
Other/No Response	167,955	21.1	41	22.2	19.8
All Students	1,206,455	21.1	54	22.0	19.7

*Not all students identify their intended high school curriculum with between 9 percent and 10 percent not reporting high school course information for each subtest.